

# Patient Care Experience

**Patient care experience is one of the criteria for admission to the UW-Madison Physician Assistant Program. Applicants must demonstrate health care experience sufficient for an understanding of:**

- The role of the physician assistant
- General knowledge of health care professions
- The structure of the health care system
- Their own aptitude for the PA profession

Direct patient care experience with some level of responsibility for the patient is valued most highly by the admissions committee. Other demonstrated commitment to health care, such as shadowing physician assistants and community service are also regarded favorably, but do not count towards direct patient care. Applicants are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned from these experiences as they make their commitment to be a physician assistant.

A minimum of 1000 hours of direct-patient care experience is required for your application to be reviewed. However, we recommend that you have 1500-2000+ hours to be competitive. Successful applicants present with significant highly responsible volunteer experience and professional experience in a health care setting. Most successful applicants have been employed in health care and also have volunteer experiences.

## Options to Gain Direct Patient Care Experience

The following are some examples of how successful applicants have acquired health care experience. Order does not indicate preference. Applicants should choose to work in a setting that reflects their personality and interests.

- Certified Nursing Assistant. Many applicants choose this route because training and jobs are readily available. Certification can be obtained through technical schools and some nursing homes.
- Emergency Medical Technician. Certification can be obtained through some technical schools and hospitals.
- Medical Assistant. Training can be obtained through some technical schools, hospitals and clinics.
- Psychiatric Care Technician. The State of Wisconsin offers an aptitude exam and trains qualified applicants for employment in state mental health institutions. Contact the State of Wisconsin, Department of Employee Relations for testing dates and employment information.
- Phlebotomist. Training can be obtained through some technical schools or plasma donor centers. Some clinics or hospitals may offer on-the-job training to people with relevant work or

volunteer experience.

- Home health aide or personal care attendant. Training available from some technical schools or agencies. Potential applicants choosing this type of experience should supplement it with volunteer or work experience in an institutional setting.
- Research assistant. Some successful applicants have worked on research projects that involve interactions with patients that include performing procedures such as phlebotomy and EKGs.
- Volunteer work in hospitals, clinics or nursing homes. For direct patient care hours, volunteers must have direct medical responsibility for patients.

Some applicants have found volunteer work in emergency rooms and other clinical settings a good way to get started in acquiring health care experience.

- Volunteer work in health-related agencies or organizations such as hospice, Planned Parenthood, the Red Cross, AIDS support, etc., can also include significant patient interaction. For direct patient care hours, volunteers must have direct medical responsibility for patients. Contact agencies directly or, on the UW-Madison campus, visit the Morgridge Center for Public Service in the Red Gym, on campus at 716 Langdon Street.

**Other direct patient care experience:** Applicants are not limited to obtaining health care experience from the above suggested list. You are encouraged to be resourceful and creative. However, please contact the PA Program if you are unsure if your health care experience will qualify as direct-patient care.

**PLEASE NOTE: While working as a medical scribe is valuable health care experience, it does not meet our criteria for direct patient care experience as there is no direct medical responsibility for the patient.**

## Additional Health Care Experience

While completing the CASPA application for the PA Program, you will also have the opportunity to complete sections regarding shadowing experience and all other health care experience.

**Health Care Shadowing Experience:** Shadowing physician assistants is a good way to learn about the profession. Because it is an **observational** experience, it is not the equivalent of direct patient care. Many potential applicants identify PAs in their home communities by contacting the human resources office of a clinic or hospital.

**Other Health Care Experience:** Other health care experience may be listed in the Health Related Experience section of the application.